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Celebrating the Potential of All People

February 23, 2012

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To: The Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee

From: The Kennedy Center, Inc.

Ref: Raised Bill No. 5036

Senator Fonfara, Rep. T. R. Rowe, and the members of the Legislative Program Review and Investigations Committee (PRI), on behalf of The Kennedy Center, its consumers, families and employees, we thank you for your extensive work that has resulted in Raised Bill No. 5036.

The Kennedy Center, Inc. is a 501 (c) 3, non-profit community-based rehabilitation organization offering innovative and comprehensive services to persons with special needs and disabilities, from birth through their senior years. The Kennedy Center is internationally accredited through CARF (Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities). Since first seeking accreditation in 1981, it has consistently received the highest level of accreditation and recently received its third perfect accreditation without recommendations, which places it among the top 1% of rehabilitation organizations internationally. On an annual basis, nearly two thousand individuals receive services through our departments of Rehabilitation Services, Residential Services and Kennedy Industries. We serve individuals located in 83 cities throughout the state, primarily in New Haven and Fairfield Counties.

As we all agree, the State of Connecticut must ensure that we make the best use of our state's dollars, while providing high quality services for our very deserving citizens with disabilities. For that reason, we are extremely grateful to the committee for undertaking this objective study on the efficiency of Connecticut's service delivery system for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Likewise, we are very pleased to

Accredited
by



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learn of the study's recommendations and the resulting policy objectives. These recommendations and policy objectives clearly articulate the great value of private providers and the vital role they must play if we are to ensure the continued delivery of high quality service at the lowest possible cost to our taxpayers.

We are grateful for this acknowledgement and validation of nonprofit private providers, as offering the most cost-effective and efficient ways of assisting people with disabilities. We are equally appreciative of the 1% COLA, effective January 2013, as recommended in the Governor's budget. This is a good start in addressing the long time underfunding of private providers. However, this prolonged underfunding, whereby costs have risen and reimbursement rates have decreased or remained flat, has created a condition that considerably challenges their survival. As a result, many critical infrastructure needs of private providers have been deferred in the interest of maintaining programs and retaining employees. Electronic medical records, other IT infrastructure costs and emergency preparedness are all necessary expenditures. Yet, private providers continue in their struggle to balance organizational needs with the needs of those served. Thus, we urge approval of the Raised Bill, with special consideration for the provision of necessary dollars to ensure the continued viability of non-profit private providers as a strong partner with the State of Connecticut in meeting the need of our children and adults with intellectual disabilities.

Once again, we thank you for your time and consideration. The Kennedy Center remains committed to working with the legislature, in any capacity that is needed, to address these issues.

Tina Varick
Grants & Projects Manager
The Kennedy Center, Inc.